

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 290327Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7632
INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 34678

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TH, BM
SUBJECT: RTG ATTITUDE TOWARDS BURMESE DISSIDENTS

REF: BANGKOK 3916

1. AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI REPORTS THAT IN CONVERSATION HE HAD DEC 20 WITH POLICE GENERAL WICHAI WICHAITANAPAT (COMMANDER, REGION III OF THE BPP), WICHAI SAID THAT HE HAD DIRECT ORDERS FROM GENERAL CHAROEN PHONGPHONIT (CHIEF OF STAFF OF SUPREME COMMAND) TO GET THE SHAN STATE ARMY AS WELL AS OTHER BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS OUT OF THAILAND. WICHAI WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT HAPPY ABOUT THE "ORDER" AND APPEARED TO BE UNSURE ABOUT EXACTLY HOW HE WAS TO PROCEED. WHEN OUR CONSUL ASKED IF THERE WERE DIFFERING OPINIONS WITHIN THE RTG IN BANGKOK ABOUT THAI POLICY TOWARDS DISSIDENT GROUPS, WICHAI ANSWERED WITH A STRONG AFFIRMATIVE.

2. WICHAI SAID THAT, IN THE PRESENT CASE, HE WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO TALK TO THE SHAN LEADERS AND PERSUADE THEM TO MOVE OUT OF THAI TERRITORY, JUST ACROSS THE BORDER INTO BURMA. OUR CONSUL COMMENTS THAT THE BURMESE DISSIDENT POSITIONS IN BURMA WILL PROBABLY BE CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE
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BORDER SO THAT, IF THEY ARE ATTACKED BY THE BURMESE ARMY, THEY COULD CROSS BACK INTO THAILAND TO SEEK TEMPORARY SANCTUARY.

3. COMMENT: FROM OTHER CONTACTS WE HAVE HAD RECENTLY WITH HIGH LEVELS OF THE RTG AND THE THAI MILITARY, WE

BELIEVE THE REPORTED ORDER FROM GEN. CHAROEN TO GEN. WICHAI REPRESENTS ACCURATELY THE DESIRE OF THE THAI AUTHORITIES TO MOVE THE BURMESE REBELS OUT OF THAI TERRITORY. THAI POLICY UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS THUS ESSENTIALLY CONSISTENT WITH RTG POLICY UNDER PREVIOUS, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT (REFTEL). THE RTG APPEARS TO WANT TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH BURMA AND UNDERSTANDS THAT IT MUST DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS END. MOVING THE BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS OFF THAI SOIL AND INTO BURMA REALLY WON'T ACCOMPLISH MUCH, AS THE BURMESE ARMY DOES NOT RPT NOT APPEAR TO HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO CONTROL THE SHAN PLATEAU AS A WHOLE. THE RTG DECISION MENTIONED BY GEN. WICHAI IS THUS ESSENTIALLY A GESTURE, BUT IT IS POTENTIALLY A USEFUL ONE, AT LEAST IN TERMS OF IMPROVING THAI-BURMESE RELATIONS.

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